

A World *of* Gratitude

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Stretched by God through other Cultures

- Surprised by how God's sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness converge in some unexpected ways.
 - **Sovereignty:** God can do anything and does whatever he wants.
 - **Wisdom:** God knows the best things to do and the best ways to do them.
 - **Goodness:** God always has good intentions, does good, and produces good.
- **Gratitude is higher when *surprising* or *unexpected*** (McCullough), and that has been and is my story. Here's a glimpse.



Culture

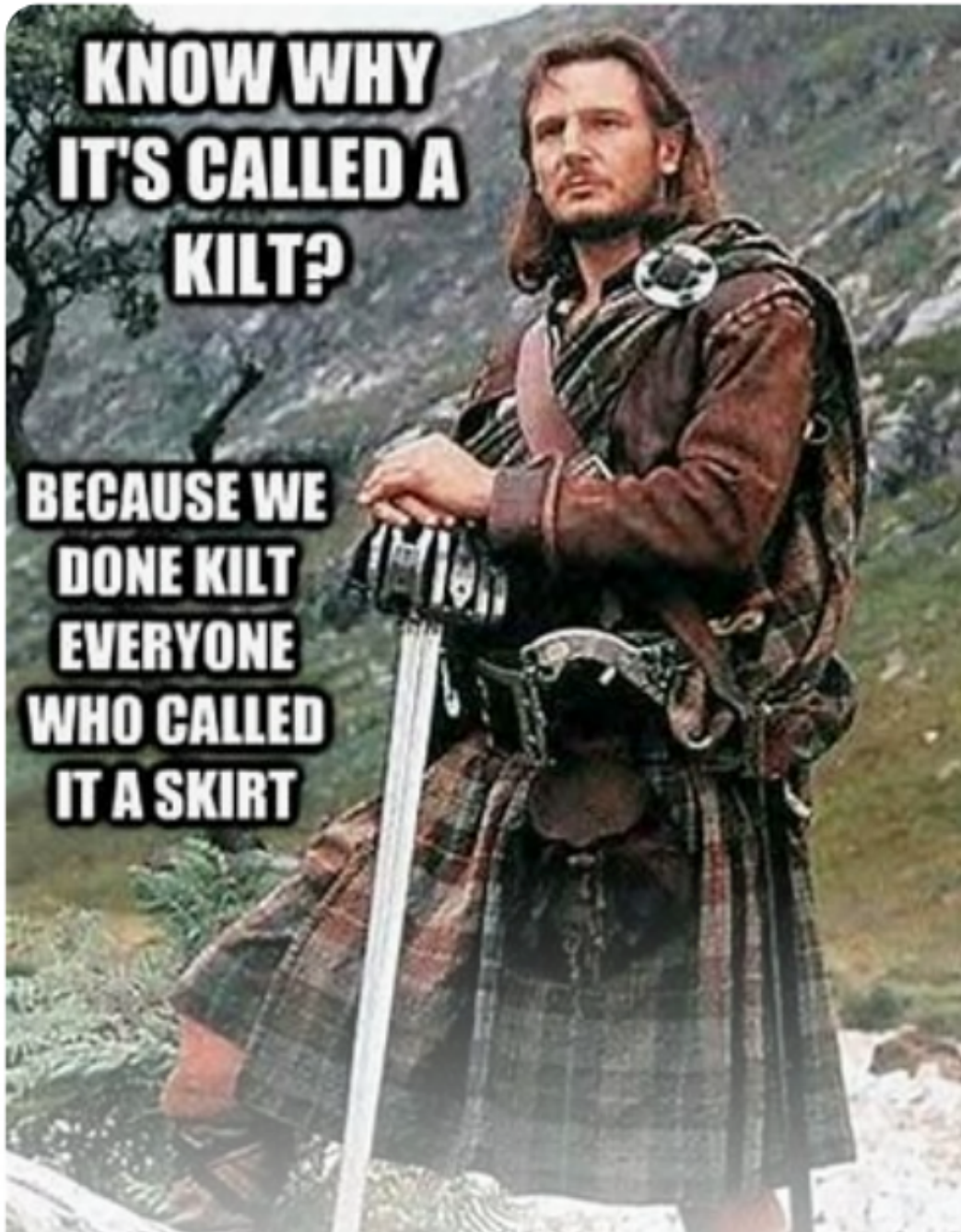
Scotland



PANTS???



**I THINK YOU MEAN
"LONG-SLEEVED DIAPERS."**



**KNOW WHY
IT'S CALLED A
KILT?**

**BECAUSE WE
DONE KILT
EVERYONE
WHO CALLED
IT A SKIRT**



Many Opportunities for More Gratitude

Orality
Power
Collectivity
Uncertainty

Grateful that God is stretching me.





Orality

Philippines











WISDOM RECEIVED
THEY WALK
BY MEANS TO FIND
AND RACE

Love



Maria

I'm grateful that God surprised me with Maria and her challenge and is stretching me in orality.



Power

Brazil & Philippines



Brazil



Philippines

I'm grateful that God surprised me with a different dynamic in learning, stretching me in power distance.

Poor Alex.



Jesus and Power Dynamics

- Mark 11–12

Who has the divine authority and power to be the arbiter of truth for God's people?

- Chief priests, scribes, elders? *Jesus retains the authority as arbiter.*
- Pharisees and Herodians? (What?!) *Jesus retains the authority as arbiter.*
- Sadducees? *Jesus retains the authority as arbiter.*
- The Scribe? Mark 12:28–34.

When dealing with the power distance between God and humans...

We do not *only* need to “learn together” as equals...

We need a Lord who speaks and we listen, learn, and live.

Jesus as arbiter of the truth.



Collectivity

India





पुलिस सहायता केंद्र
मटियारी, थाना - चिना
जनपद - लखनऊ

पुलिस सहायता केंद्र
मटियारी
आप कैमरे की नजर में हैं

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जायका टिफिन सर्विस
REASONABLE FEE
QUALITY EDUCATION CENTRE

डिजिटल कला
मोडर्न





A photograph showing three men sitting around a table, focused on their work. The man in the center, wearing a red shirt and glasses, is writing in a notebook. The man on the left, in a light blue shirt, is looking towards him. The man on the right is partially visible, also looking down at his work. The table is cluttered with papers, notebooks, and pens. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wooden table and chairs.

Markus

I'm grateful that God surprised me with a different dynamic in learning and even calling, stretching me in collectivity.

Jesus and the Collective

- Jesus's Body

- Body = collective
- Parts = individuals

- Equal measure collective and individual, like $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$?

- Body = collective
- Parts = individuals, but only in relationship *with* others and *for* the body

Jesus certainly does *not* deny individuality!
But neither does he *assume* or *emphasize* it as much as Americans do.



Uncertainty

Uganda







Joseph Kony and the LRA.
God's mercy and Tandu Daniel.

*I'm grateful that God surprised me with a different dynamic in learning,
stretching me to grapple with uncertainty avoidance and acceptance.*



Jesus, Certainty, and Uncertainty

- **Certainty** in God's character, Word, and Spirit—God *is* sovereign, wise, and good and that he will *never* change. *Can you be stretched in gratitude for that?*
- **Uncertainty** in *exactly how* God will employ his sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness. *Can you be stretched in gratitude for that? (It does mean you are not in control... liberating.)*
- **Uncertainty** in reception: will you be the fragrance of Christ's life or stench of his death to people who hear and see Christ in you. *Can you be stretched in gratitude for that?*
- **Certainty** in salvation—for those in Christ's hand, if anyone snatches you out of it then *Jesus* has failed... and that is impossible! *Can you be stretched in gratitude for that?*





A World *of* Gratitude

I'm grateful that our sovereign, wise, and good God is stretching me, even though it can be confusing and humiliating. For the stretching makes me better fit for others' goodness.